

FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SECURITY : CONFIDENTIAL

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TO : Department of State

Enclosures 2

FROM : BRUSSELS 324 October 2, 1950 755.11/10-250

XR 755.00

REF : Brussels' despatch 124, Aug. 11, 1950

SUBJECT : Belgian Royal Question: PSC Commission of Inquiry;
Congress of Social Christian Party.

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Following the political crisis at the end of July, 1950 when King LEOPOLD III pledged his deferred abdication and his eldest son, Prince BAUDOUIN, assumed the duties of Chief of State as Prince Royal, the majority party in this Kingdom, the Social Christian Party (PSC), has undergone much searching of the soul.

Three times within the space of one year the Party had gone to the polls--twice in national elections and once in the Popular Consultation of March 12, 1950--pledged to do its utmost to restore the King to his throne. As the electorate had indicated that a majority of the population of Belgium desired to see the King restored to his prerogatives, there was a very natural indignation among those members of the Party who desired the King's return when [REDACTED] the King [REDACTED] give up his crown.

In consequence and preparatory to a national congress of the PSC, a Commission of Inquiry was appointed to assess responsibility for the events which led to the deferred abdication of the King.

The Commission of Inquiry was appointed by the National Committee and the General Council of the PSC on August 5, 1950. It was presided by a Flemish lawyer from Courtrai, M. VANDERKERKHOVE, and consisted of a provincial counselor from Liège, M. HERBIET; M. SMEDT, president of the PSC of the District of Malines; M. VERBIST, a deputy from Malines and a former Minister of Public Health, M. OBLIN,

R. McClintock/mee
File 461.1

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/a deputy

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ACTION COPY—DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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deputy from Soignies; M. DERBAIX, senator from Charleroi, and M. BAERT, senator from Roulers-Thielt. [REDACTED] B-1

The report of the Commission of Inquiry assessed the responsibility of the DUVIEUSART Government for the abdication of the King, and the responsibility of the PSC as a party for the events at the close of July and the opening of August. The Commission felt that although the King's own offer of April 15, temporarily to delegate his powers to the Crown Prince, had considerable influence on the final turn of events and that the intervention of the National Commission of Political Prisoners who at the eleventh hour urged the King's abdication also contributed to the outcome, nevertheless the Duvieusart Government had committed "several political faults". These were listed as

1. Not having taken steps to be sufficiently informed of the situation.
2. Not to have taken sufficient precautions, both juridical and material, to maintain order and to insure freedom of employment, despite advance notice that trouble was coming.
3. To have tolerated abuse of their privileges by the leaders of the opposition party who used the national radio to incite civil disobedience.
4. To have given in before the threat of violence and to have entered into negotiations with the King with undue haste.
5. To have concluded the agreement with Leopold on the night of July 31-August 1 in too hasty a manner without previous deliberation in the Cabinet, despite the fact that this was so weighty a decision as the deferred but definite abdication of the King.^{2/}

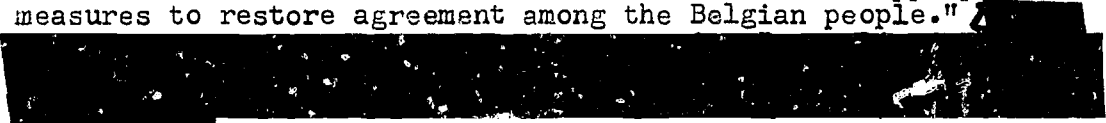
As for Party responsibility, the Commission found that the Party had consistently advocated the restoration of King Leopold, and even on the eve of the final crisis had reaffirmed its resolution to restore the King. The Party had officially never waived from this course. This contrasted with the fact that the "Committee of Contact" between the Party and the Government had admitted in its meeting of July 31 that as a means of calming the tense situation concessions should be made; and that this Committee, even before order was reestablished, had entered negotiations with the King under threat

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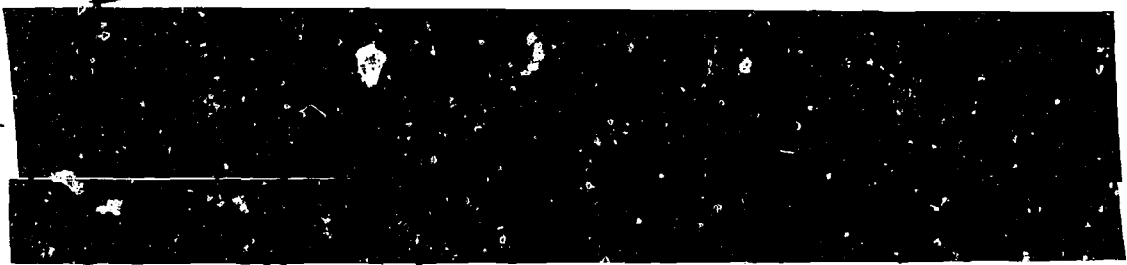
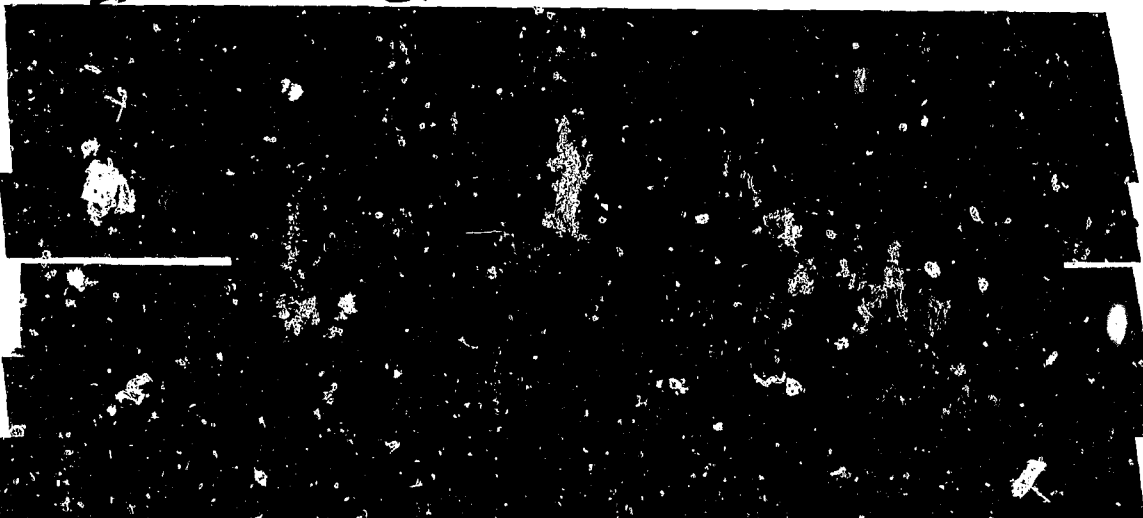
-3- BRUSSELS 324, October 2, 1950

of violence. Furthermore, the National Committee of the Party in its communique of July 29 had decided "to reaffirm confidence in the Government to restore calm and then to take appropriate measures to restore agreement among the Belgian people." 2

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As for personal responsibility the Commission of Inquiry

"insistently demands all persons who find that they are in this situation (of having personal responsibility for the events attendant on the King's abdication) to refuse any important political function, or to resign therefrom. So far as may be necessary the Commission asks the National Committee to have contact with the electoral districts and the Parliamentary groups and, respecting all their rights to make a defense, to take all necessary measures to deprive of their functions persons who are found in the situation contemplated above." 2/

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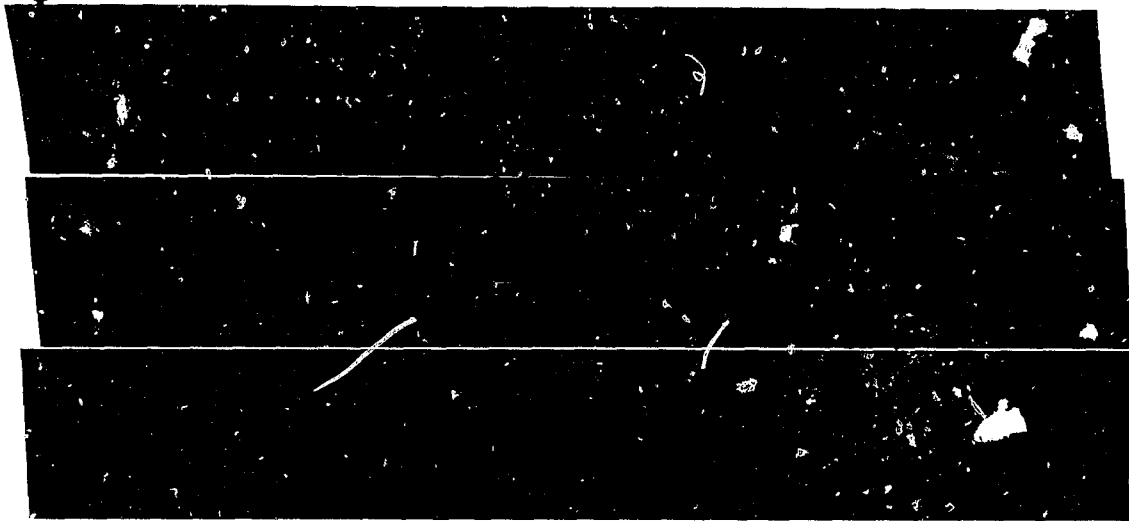
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[REDACTED] B-1
[REDACTED] the National Congress of the Social
Christian Party wound up on a hopeful note of unity. B-1
[REDACTED] B-1

[REDACTED] the Congress merely
"took note" of the conclusions of the Commission and expressed
its confidence that the National Committee of the Party would ex-
amine the Commission's report in the light of the observations
and suggestions made during the congress itself. 4/

The new president of the Party, Mr. Théo DE FEVRE, a middle-
of-the-road young deputy from Ghent, drew a laugh when he said
that at the moment he assumed the presidency he thought of Marie
de Bourgogne:

"When she took over the power of the seventeen pro-
vinces they asked her to conquer the enemy but on condi-
tion that her counselors should be decapitated. That is
more or less what has happened to me.*****Let us not con-
tinue this game of rapidly running through our presidents
and our prime ministers. Let us take as a good example
the Socialists who are much more economical of their
men."

2/ The Party unanimously agreed on a resolution whose text, in
translation, forms the second enclosure to this despatch. The
Congress paid homage to the "grandeur of soul" of the King who
had sacrificed his person to spare the country from great danger;
stigmatized the "revolutionary methods" employed by the Belgian
Socialist Party with the "culpable complicity of the Liberals";
regretted that a PSC government should have become the govern-
ment of deferred abdication; and affirmed Party solidarity around
the Prince Royal. Perhaps most significant was that part of the
resolution noting "that the majority of the nation has pronounced
itself in the elections as against any form of coalition govern-
ment and expects, in consequence, of the homogeneous PSC Govern-
ment the progressive and complete application of the Party's
program." In other words, the Catholic Party will seek to go
it alone.

The Congress concluded with an address by Prime Minister
PHOLIEN, who stressed that his Government had established a plan
for the national defense which would give Belgium the forces nec-
essary for its protection but that "in this regard the Government
is resolved not to impose burdens on the citizens more than are
strictly necessary." M. Pholien likewise averted to his program

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-7- BRUSSELS 324, October 2, 1950

for weeding out Communists and other subversive elements from the administration and indicated that the Government "had also taken measures with regard to those who were culpable of reprehensible acts during the events of July." However, he promised that there would be no policy of vengeance.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

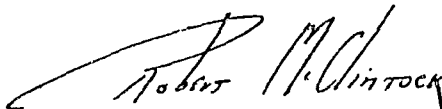
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For the Ambassador:


Robert McClintock
First Secretary of Embassy

Enclosures:

[REDACTED]

2. Resolution of PSC in translation

Handwritten note: Not to be released upon request. - D/R

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CITATION TO FOOTNOTES

- 1/ Brussels Press, August 6, 1950
Confidential Parliamentary source
- 2/ Report of P.S.C. Commission of Inquiry, published
in La Libre Belgique, Sept. 18, 1950
- 3/  8-1
- 4/ Report of P.S.C. Congress in La Libre Belgique,
Sept. 25, 1950

SECURITY: CONFIDENTIAL

Enclosure 2 to

BRUSSELS 324, October 2, 1950

Source: La Libre Belgique, Sept. 25 1950

TRANSLATION OF RESOLUTION BY P.S.C.

The Congress renders homage to the grandeur of the soul of the King who has sacrificed his person to spare the country from grave trials.

It stigmatizes the revolutionary methods employed by the Belgian Socialist Party, as well as the guilty complicity of the Liberals; regrets that a P.S.C. Government should become the government of deferred abdication; groups itself, in conformity with the wishes of the King, around the Prince Royal and accords him its unconditional support.

The Congress:

Notes that the majority of the nation has pronounced itself at the elections against any form of coalition government and expects, in consequence of the homogeneous P.S.C. Government, the progressive and complete application of the party program.

The Congress:

Approves the conclusions of the rapporteurs; transmits them to the National Committee with the amendments submitted by members; invites the National Committee to undertake the immediate application of the following points on a priority basis:

1. To take every measure to safeguard our liberties and Christian civilization; on the national scale, in restoring and reinforcing the shattered authority and the security of the State; on the international scale, in assuring for the military, economic, and spiritual defense of Western Europe, grouped within the framework of the Atlantic community;
2. To carry out or complete reforms of structure as well as other urgent social reforms, notably those relative to the family, to the maintenance and stability of the currency and the balance between prices and salaries; to insure an equitable division of taxation;
3. To assure to all Belgian parents, and in consequence all Christian parents, the real use of the constitutional freedom of instruction, and in particular, with regard to middle school technical instruction;

SECURITY: CONFIDENTIAL

Page 2, Enclosure 2 to BRUSSELS

324 of October 2, 1950

Source: La Libre Belgique, Sept. 25, 1950

4. To insure with a view to national concord, the rapid and definitive solution of problems deriving from repression and the purging (of collaborators);
5. To accelerate the study of problems relating to closer accord between Flemings and Walloons.

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